DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 279 653 SP 028 669

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TITLE Lessons Learned: Establishing Mentoring Roles in Two Preparation-Induction Programs. Mentorship as a Support System Model.
PUB DATE Feb 87
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators (67th, Houston, TX, February 15-18, 1987). For related document, see ED 278 667.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Beginning Teachers; Career Ladders; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Internship Programs; *Mentors; *Preservice Teacher Education; *Professional Development; *Program Length; Teacher Orientation
IDENTIFIERS Beginning Teacher Induction; *Extended Degree Programs

ABSTRACT

Two combined preparation and induction programs for teacher candidates at Memphis State University (Tennessee), the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program and the Lyndhurst program, utilize a mentoring approach to professional development for program interns and beginning teachers. Each candidate has two mentors: a pedagogical mentor from the College of Education and a practitioner mentor representing the cooperating school. Area specialist mentors are also used. This provides a mechanism for establishing closer collaboration between higher education personnel and secondary school professionals, making new teacher preparation a joint responsibility. This also provides an opportunity to elevate the status and image of outstanding practitioners while taking advantage of their unique abilities. A description is given of how the mentorship support system operates in both the MAT program and the Lyndhurst program. (JD)

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Lessons Learned: Establishing Mentoring Roles in Two Preparation-Induction Programs
Mentorship as a Support System Model

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National Conference
Houston, Texas
February, 1987

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Lessons Learned: Establishing Mentoring Roles in
Two Preparation-Induction Programs
Mentorship as a Support System Model

Memphis State University's College of Education launched two extended programs for preparing secondary teachers in June 1985. These programs are, in reality, combination preparation-induction programs. Since the delivery models were new, a front end goal was established to implement practices that represented the best thinking as reflected in the teacher career development literature. Simultaneous with the development and implementation of these programs, the State of Tennessee was embarking upon its landmark efforts in educational reform. As part of this state movement, the Tennessee Career Ladder for teachers was established, thus opening potentially fertile ground for collaborative arrangements.

The programs, a newly conceptualized M.A.T. and Lyndhurst, are lock step, intensive and have the internship as the centerpiece. The internships differ; however both require that the candidates assume independent status as teachers. In analyzing the design of the programs and projecting this to the professional development needs of the candidates, it was obvious that an ongoing strong support system was necessary. Furthermore the support system would need a high degree of elasticity, that is, the immediate capability for responding to legitimate needs of the candidates, and the professionals who serve in a support capacity must have high levels of technical skills and outstanding interpersonal skills.

Mentoring: Why use it?

Given the unique needs of the program, a decision was made to utilize a mentoring approach to professional development, primarily because this particular approach was perceived as having several distinct advantages. One advantage was the opportunity to provide a personalized support system. Each candidate would have specific individuals identified as primary resource persons. Second, it would provide a mechanism for establishing closer collaboration between higher education personnel and secondary school professionals, making new teacher preparation a joint responsibility. Third, it connoted an approach to professional development that reflected the multi-dimensionality of professionalism and a career long perception of development. Fourth, it provided an opportunity to elevate the status and image of outstanding practitioners while taking advantage of their unique abilities.

Mentoring as an approach to teaching and learning dates to antiquity when Odysseus entrusted his son to a man named Mentor. More recently mentoring has gained increased attention as an approach to professional development. The reasons for this attention are evident when the definitions of mentors and the descriptions of mentoring are studied. Rawlins and Rawlins (1983) state that, "Mentors teach, advise, encourage, open doors for, show politics and subtleties of jobs and help one understand power structures." Alleman and associates (1984) see mentoring as, "A relationship in which a person of greater rank and or expertise teaches, guides and develops a novice in an organization

or profession." The Tennessee State Department of Education's Career Development Program module Mentorship Development (1985) states that, "(Mentor) refers to one who is experienced and trusted, who advises, teaches, and trains relative newcomers to the profession." Inherent within these descriptions are the qualities that potential mentors ought to possess, roles they ought to perform and responsibilities they ought to assume.

Mentoring, as an approach to professional development, has benefits for the beginning professional, the mentor, the organization and the profession. Bova and Phillips (1984) suggest 10 things that proteges learn from mentors. These are risk taking skills, communication skills, survival in the organization, skills of the profession, respect for people, setting high standards, how to be a good listener, how to get along with all kinds of people, leadership qualities and what it means to be a professional. Gehrke and Kay (1984) found that mentors of beginning teachers were most likely to play the following roles: teacher, confidant, role model, developer of talent, and sponsor. Schmidt and Wolfe (1980) saw mentors as performing primarily three functions. These were role model, consultant/advisor and sponsor. Levinson (1978) saw mentoring as part of the developmental process that Erickson referred to as "generativity." Finally, the 1984 Comprehensive Education Reform Act (CERA) passed by the Tennessee legislature mandated that experienced teachers share in the responsibility for preparing and inducting new teachers into the profession.

The seminal works of Lortie (1975) and Goodlad (1984) provide insights into the impact that the work place has on the development of teacher attitudes and outlooks regarding teaching, learning and the role of schooling. Since the two programs are combination preparation and induction programs, there was every reason to believe that the historic problems associated with novice teachers would exist as obstacles (hopefully challenges) for the candidates. Rather than take the unrealistic position and simplistic position of trying to will away these problems, a better option was to make encounters with these conditions a positive experience by turning them into challenges and opportunities for improving the quality of teacher preparation, induction and delivery of instructional programs.

Mentorship as a Support Model: How does it operate?

The support system is comprised of a mentoring team that is layered in terms of responsibility. The first level is represented by a pedagogical mentor from the College of Education and a practitioner mentor representing the cooperating school. The second level is represented by a content area specialist and a special methods specialist. The third level is comprised of the other specialists available through the College and school system. These general features are evident in both preparation models. However, implementation differs between the two models; therefore, each model is discussed separately.

Master of Arts in Teaching Program

The Master of Arts in Teaching program is both a degree and certification program that requires 15 months for completion. The

Fellows (candidates) enter in June and the class is divided into groups called cohorts. The internship is phased and Fellows assume increasing responsibility for classroom teaching as they progress through it. During the spring semester, they teach two classes as teacher-of-record and work in the classroom with the practitioner mentor for two periods.

The pedagogical mentor is the key to the support system. During the summer term, each cohort is assigned a "lead" mentor. The primary roles are those of counselor, advisor, listener, advocate and confidant(e). Establishing rapport and gaining the confidence of members of the cohort are the critical outcomes desired.

Effective with the fall semester, a pedagogical mentoring team is assigned to work with each cohort. Individual pedagogical mentors will work with four to six Fellows. In addition to the five roles listed above, mentors serve many roles as Fellows progress through the program. They do the following: observe and critique teaching performance, coordinate the evaluation of progress regarding teaching performance, participate in periodic staffings regarding progress of Fellows, serve as an "outside" observer of the teaching performance of other Fellows, serve as a member of the thesis committee, work as a liaison between the university and the schools to which Fellows are assigned, consult and conference with assigned Fellows, conduct seminar, and serve as an advocate for the Fellows.

The practitioner mentors join the team when the Fellows assume a permanent school placement in the late fall. Released

time is built into the model. Fellows are assigned to teach at least one of the classes that normally would be taught by the mentor. Practitioner mentors provide an invaluable service. During the spring internship assignment, they host the Fellow in two of their classes. The Fellow becomes an assistant. Practitioner mentors use this time to role model and demonstrate an array of professional skills and attributes. As the school based mentor, they perform many other roles. They act as an advocate for the Fellow within the school and system; they assist with the observation, critique and evaluation of teaching performance; they counsel and advise regarding school and district related issues; and they serve as a professional friend.

Other professional resources are available as needed. If the need should arise, selected members from these areas will work with the pedagogical mentor and practitioner mentor to form a pedagogical "swat" team.

Lyndhurst Program

The Lyndhurst Program is a certification only program. Fellows enter in June and complete the program with the conclusion of the academic year of the school system to which they are assigned. Their internship consists of one placement and the teaching assignment remains constant throughout the year.

The mentoring team has three prominent members. These members are a pedagogical mentor, a practitioner mentor, and a content mentor.

The pedagogical mentor is the key individual. These mentors oversee the development of their assigned Fellows. They observe

and critique teaching performance; conference with the practitioner mentor and content mentor, serve as an advocate for the Fellow, and consult with the Fellow on a variety of issues related to the Program and that individual's professional development. The pedagogical mentor also serves as a liaison for the College with the local school.

The practitioner mentor is the school system's official representative and the primary support person within the school. The internship model is designed to provide released time for them to fulfill their obligations. They function as role models who invite the Fellows into their classes where they demonstrate exemplary teaching and professional behavior. Their roles include the following: door-opener, listener, consultant regarding a variety of school issues, protector and advocate. They critique teaching performance and consult with the pedagogical mentor regarding the professional development of indiviudal fellows.

The content mentor represents the subject field speciality of the Fellow. This person serves as a link between the content area as a discipline of study and the subject field area as condensed and taught in the secondary school. The content mentor may make classroom observations. When this occurs, this mentor gets involved in the evaluation process. The role of this mentor is less clear than that of the other two mentors. However, these mentors are important resource persons and contribute to total support system that exists for the Fellows.

The other specialists who are available get involved when requested by the pedagogical mentors and practitioners. Again, if

necessary, a pedagogical "swat" team can be formed.

Conclusion

The Dictionary of Occupational Titles rates mentor as the highest and most complex level of functioning in people related hierarchy of skills. As an approach to a professional development that utilizes experienced, trusted, and competent professionals to assist the newcomer, mentorship is a viable model. The expertise is immediately available and this approach has the capability of adjusting to the special needs of unique individuals. If high functioning professionals are available who want to accept the challenge, then a mentoring approach ought to be considered.

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